

Client: Utah
Source: TTG Live (Web)
Date: 11 November 2010
Page: N/A
Reach: 2671
Value: 72



Touring: Take your home away

Motorhome holidays might mean less commission on hotels, but they can still make an agent a tidy profit. Peter Ellegard explores how to book them and looks at some of the top motorhome holiday destinations

For holidaymakers planning to hit the road overseas, renting a car is not the only option. More and more people are opting for motorhomes or camper vans, rather than driving a car and staying in hotels en route.

And these sort of people give agents a great chance to boost income, thanks to the increasing number of operators featuring motorhomes, and the suppliers and intermediaries that offer commission.

While motorhomes can be rented in many countries, the most popular destinations are those where the open road beckons and the countryside lends itself to touring itineraries – making the US, Canada, New Zealand and Australia particular favourites.

Motorhome rentals began in the US in the early 1970s, where they are known as recreational vehicles, or RVs. But things have changed dramatically since then.

“Vehicles are much more modern and user-friendly,” says Austravel brand manager Ben Briggs. “They are also very affordable. Motorhomes are an economical way to travel.”

Linda and Patrick Richardson have been marketing and selling rental vehicles for 35 years, and until 2009 ran rental company Cruise America’s UK office. They now own and run Cruiseamerica.co.uk, which offers a range of vehicles that pay agents 10% commission on time and mileage.

Linda says modern vehicles are built for the rental market as they have more durable fittings, are easier to drive and use less fuel, while private campgrounds have electrical hook-up, water connection and waste disposal, as do many US national parks. She also says renters are encouraged to book bigger motorhomes as they are often cheaper than more popular smaller ones.

Canada specialist Frontier has launched a dedicated motorhome website offering rentals in the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, and has seen year-on-year growth in bookings of 23%. It pays agents 5% commission, but product manager Julie Thompson points out that two-week summer bookings typically cost £1,500.

“The good thing about motorhome bookings is that they are very easy, and money can be made easily by upselling vehicle size or type or adding mileage packs,” she says. “However, there is a lack of product knowledge as it is a speciality area with many types of vehicles on offer – and the misconception that it is like a caravan. They offer so much more.”

Vehicles in Canada and the US range from truck campers with beds over the cab to 32-foot bus-style vehicles sleeping seven or eight. Some have slide-out sides to enlarge the accommodation area when parked.

In Australia and New Zealand, operators such as Austravel and Qantas Holidays offer motorhomes and camper vans, and agents also have the option of booking directly through rental companies such as Britz and Maui, both part of Tourism Holdings.



Client: Utah
Source: TTG Live (Web)
Date: 11 November 2010
Page: N/A
Reach: 2671
Value: 72



Kate Meldrum, Tourism Holdings' general manager marketing and customer experience, says motorhomes are becoming an increasingly popular way to travel. "Last year was our biggest in Australia," she says.

The luxury end has grown in response to demand for more quality, Meldrum adds, with spacious top-end vehicles sleeping up to six and sporting leather seats, shower and toilet, apartment-style kitchens with large fridges, TVs and DVD players.

At the other end of the scale, clients wanting a cheap and simple solution have boosted the basic camper van market, with the smallest vehicles sleeping just two.

Austravel's Briggs explains their appeal: "Motorhomes are an excellent way to holiday for travellers. They provide the freedom to see a lot of a country in a short space of time, and let people visit the attractions and towns they want.

"They are also great for families, letting them spend quality holiday time together. A lot of campsites have facilities for children, and if they tire of the great outdoors many motorhomes have TVs and DVD players to keep them amused."

Holiday Autos offers motorhomes in several destinations, but does not pay commission to agents on motorhomebookings. Avis has motorhome rentals in France through its Avis Car-Away franchise.

WHERE TO GO

From California to Calgary, Australia's Great Ocean Road to travelling the length of New Zealand – what are the top motorhome holidays?

The US

Cruiseamerica.co.uk's Linda Richardson says tours generally last at least 19 nights and that California is the most popular state for RV touring, with San Francisco the top pick-up point for 2011 bookings for an itinerary that includes Yosemite National Park, San Diego, Big Sur, Carmel, Monterey and a side visit to Las Vegas. It also takes in Death Valley, although she advises against sending clients there in July and August.

Combining Arizona and Utah is also popular – starting off in Phoenix and taking in the Grand Canyon, Lake Powell, the national parks of Zion, Bryce, Canyonlands and Arches, plus Moab, Monument Valley and Sedona.

Another favourite is the "Cowboy Country" tour from Denver, which takes in Cheyenne, Mount Rushmore, Deadwood, Devil's Tower, Cody, Yellowstone National Park and Jackson.

Canada

Frontier's Thompson singles out Vancouver to Calgary as the most popular route, although she says doing it from Calgary saves on tax. "Driving is so easy in Canada and there are so many good campsites, particularly in the parks, with very good facilities. It is ideal for motorhome holidays," she says.



Client: Utah
Source: TTG Live (Web)
Date: 11 November 2010
Page: N/A
Reach: 2671
Value: 72



Australia and New Zealand

Austravel's Briggs says Australia's Great Ocean Road is one of the most popular tours, following the coast of Victoria and offering viewpoints and attractions along the way.

Many travellers do a one-way trip from Melbourne to Adelaide, while New Zealand visitors tour the North and South Islands between Auckland and Christchurch, taking in many tourist hotspots along the way.

Briggs says that most customers hire motorhomes for their entire stay in New Zealand, averaging about 20 days, while rentals with Austravel are generally 14 days as people spend time in cities before picking up a vehicle to explore.

Austravel offers Apollo vehicle rentals in both countries, with 10 pick-up and drop-off locations in Australia, as well as Auckland and Christchurch in New Zealand.

East coast tours of Australia between Brisbane and Cairns, and from Sydney to Melbourne and beyond, are among top-sellers, along with south Australia's Barossa Valley and western Australia from Perth to Margaret River. In New Zealand, one-way rentals along the length of the country are most popular.

The cheapest time in Australia is from May to June, and the most expensive mid-December to mid-January. In New Zealand, low season runs from May to September and high season from mid-December to the end of February. Four-wheel-drive camper vans are popular in Darwin from June to September. Britz and Maui have 11 locations in Australia and four in New Zealand, with two-berth vehicles with toilet and shower the top-sellers.

[sourcelink]

<http://c.moreover.com/click/here.pl?z3688321686&z=950240871>

[/sourcelink]